

U.S. Navy Tests Unmanned Aerial Vehicles at Sea

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The U.S. Navy will begin testing logistics drones on an aircraft carrier to see if the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) is practical in this environment. These drones are capable of carrying up to a 50-pound payload and can fly about 200 miles. This testing is in response to the needs of the Military Sealift Command (which controls the replenishment and military transport ships of the Navy) and the Naval Air Forces Atlantic fleet for a faster means of sending critical parts to warships at sea. The testing will be conducted by the Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division and will include up to four UAVs in operation for the testing.

The Navy has determined that about 90 percent of critical mission failures for warships underway can be repaired by sending a payload weighing less than 20 pounds, which can certainly be transported by these UAVs. For example, if a small radar component were broken, the Navy could use a UAV to transport the part from a larger vessel at sea to the smaller vessel in a short amount of time without having to reschedule a helicopter route.

The goal of this testing is to be able to use UAVs for critical part delivery at a range of 200 miles, putting the parts into the hands of the sailors efficiently and economically. This testing will occur over a two-year period.

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